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RACIAL PRACTICES IN THE ARMED FORCES

From time to time the *Interracial News Service* has carried reports of the progress made in dealing with racial discrimination in the Armed Forces. The following report was published in a bulletin by the Interracial Fellowship of Greater New York, in April, 1952. It is reprinted here for the information of our readers.

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Most people today assume that our Armed Forces are making rapid progress toward the goal of complete integration of the Negro serviceman with other servicemen in military life. In 1946 the Navy declared officially that race was to make no difference in its treatment of personnel. In 1948 the President made "equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race" his policy for all in the services by issuing Executive Order 9981. And last summer the Army announced with much fanfare that it had abolished all segregation among the troops in Korea.

As a result of these and other changes in military policy and practice, groups and individuals that have worked for change in deep-seated patterns of service discrimination have stopped being vocal. Nothing else seems needed when all three branches of service have committed themselves to programs working for racial equality.

Present practices in the Armed Forces prove this attitude ill-founded. Programs for change do not work automatically. There must be pressure from within the military establishment if they are to be carried to completion. The experience of the Air Force in securing racial integration shows this. Where sufficient internal pressure is lacking only continued pressure from civilian groups and individuals will keep the military programs moving.

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The Air Force Has a Good Record

The progress made by the Air Force in improving racial practices demonstrates what an alert military command can do to bring about positive change. When the Air Force was formed from the units of the Army Air Corps in 1947, its racial patterns were the same as the Army's — a 10% quota on Negro enlistment, Negroes in Negro units only, and greatly limited job opportunities for Negro personnel. But many high-ranking officers were convinced of the inefficiency of such policies and under the leadership of Gen. Carl Spaatz, a sweeping program for racial integration was drawn up.

This program was ready for action in 1948. Then the President appointed the Fahy Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. It was to assist the services in developing policies to achieve the objective of his executive order. Using the auspices of this committee and incorporating some changes it advised, the Air Force launched its new "integration program" on May 11, 1949 with a policy statement, strong in most areas but rather timid on the crucial subject of segregated units.

Air Force action was far from timid, however. Within eight months 4% of Negro personnel (7% of the Air Force total) was completely integrated. A majority of the Negro units were broken up, and the personnel reassigned individually to formerly all-white units. All schools and jobs were opened to qualified personnel without racial restrictions or quotas.

The program has kept up momentum unaided by outside pressure. Last fall 90% of all Negro airmen were in integrated units. A *Pittsburgh Courier* reporter, touring service bases in the United States last spring and summer, found Air Force integration almost universal. On almost all bases the Negro airman and officer work, eat, sleep and find recreation with other airmen regardless of race. No racial distinctions enter into assignment or promotion. Some all-Negro units do remain. However, for the most part the Air Force has advanced far beyond the limits of its policy statements in carrying out a revolutionary program of almost complete racial integration.

The Navy Thinks It Is Integrated

The older branches of service lack the same internal pressure for racial progress found in the Air Force. In the Navy the major problem seems to be a complacent feeling that there is no problem. Under the bold direction of Secretary Forrestal, the Navy came out of the war in 1946 with all of its ratings, except the stewards' branch, open without regard to race, and with a stated policy of no discrimination in any area of Navy life. It had been driven to this position by urgent wartime need for efficiency and economical use of

human resources. In view of these advances, Naval leaders assumed that discrimination was at an end in their service.

Yet in 1949 the Fahy committee found that few Negroes tasted the fruits of Navy integration. Negroes made up less than 5% of the Navy's total enlistment, and 60% of these were assigned as cooks and mess attendants to the still all-colored stewards' branch. The number of Negro officers on active duty was negligible with little apparent effort made to train more. Minor steps to relieve these conditions were advised by the Committee and accepted.

Two years have brought no obvious changes, however. The percent of enlistment that is Negro remains too small. All ratings have some Negroes in them, but more than half the Negro personnel work as stewards, still an exclusively colored rating. The *Pittsburgh Courier* found Negro enlistees who had been told they could only get in the Navy right away by joining as stewards. Many more have signed up for other ratings, only to find themselves assigned to the stewards after boot training. Once in that branch there seems little hope for transfer to other ratings. The number of Negro officers remains less than twenty with lieutenant the highest grade held.

These conditions are duplicated in the Navy's Marine Corps, which has some other unequal practices of its own. . . .

Apathy and Bias Confuse the Army

Before the Fahy committee disbanded in May, 1950, the Army committed itself to a program of gradual integration. However, this program has not been carried out uniformly by Army commanders, resulting in confused racial patterns.

Upon the advice of the committee the Army made many radical policy changes in January, 1950. Up until then it had done little to relieve the inefficiency and waste of manpower created by its system of discrimination and segregation. The committee in its report, *Freedom to Serve*, claims to have finally convinced the Army that these ill-effects could only be eliminated by treating its personnel equally, regardless of race. The 10% quota which had prevented any Negro enlistment since 1947 was dropped. Job opportunities and schools were opened to all with former racial restrictions removed. Negroes were no longer to be limited to all-Negro units and a few integrated post housekeeping (overhead) units. For the first time they would be assigned according to their qualifications

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to any unit. Negroes in integrated units were to work, eat and live together without segregation.

Unfortunately, the committee's argument was not convincing to all Army leadership. Much of the confusion in present Army patterns can be traced directly to the bias of individual unit and post commanders. Top-level action has produced sweeping moves of reorganization, such as the complete integration of recruit processing centers and service schools. But within individual units and commands unjust practices continue contrary to regulations. Several commanders have set up "jim crow" areas on their posts, satisfying their personal feelings on race. (e.g. Fort Lewis, Wash.; Fort Bragg, N. C.) All Negroes are forced to live in these areas, separated from their assigned units and duties. On other posts some outfits, though nominally integrated, have segregated living arrangements. Low morale and in some instances racial friction have accompanied such conditions.

More serious are the reports of commanders who have refused to accept Negro personnel assigned to their units or have attempted to have all Negroes in them reassigned to other units. In more than one case Negro officers have been forced out of positions of command when a prejudiced officer has replaced a former superior. Valuable skills are lost and injustices done through the bias of a few men in positions of authority. . . .

Where exceptionally good racial practices do exist (e.g. Fort Dix, N. J. or Fort Jackson, N. C.), they are the result of the conviction of the post commander rather than pressure from superiors.

The lack of a complete program for integration in the Army adds to the confusion created by the apathy and bias of individual commanders. Unlike the Air Force, no statement was made or action taken against the existence of all-Negro outfits under the Fahy committee. The "mixed unit", a separate Negro battalion or company within a larger white unit, has been maintained and has become the general pattern for all large permanent organizations in the United States and Europe. (Up until last July all units in the Far East were "mixed". Acute problems of morale and efficiency at the front forced the Far East Command to integrate all Negro troops with the white.)

In accordance with regulations a Negro soldier today receives his assignment without regard to his race. When he enters the Army he is usually processed, trained and given advanced schooling along with other soldiers. But when he reports to his permanent assignment he is usually placed in a Negro battalion or company. Although all his previous experience in Army life has been in integrated units, he must then adjust to a segregated situation. The disillusionment involved in this process causes serious damage to morale and efficiency.

A new policy statement abolishing the "mixed unit" would do much to improve confused Army racial patterns and to limit the possibilities for discrimination

by post and unit commanders. Such action reported due within a year. There is always the chance that such a new policy, like those of 1950, can become bogged down by bias and apathy in the chain of command. But steady pressure from interested civilian groups can make sure that the Army's supreme command moves toward the complete elimination of discrimination.

Something Should be Done in Washington

Only the Air Force, among the three services, shows very much interest in carrying out its commitment to equal treatment for all, regardless of race. The Navy is content that it has no discrimination, even though there is an all-colored stewards' branch. And the Army has a patchwork variety of patterns for handling Negro personnel, even though its overall policy has been moving toward integration.

With one out of every forty-two Americans a member of the Armed Forces, the racial patterns in the services are an important part of our nation's race problem today. Action is needed to push the Army and Navy to further moves against their discriminatory practices along the line of the praiseworthy advances already made. It is not necessary to rely on Congress. The White House and the Pentagon can do what is needed. In 1948 the President took the initiative by forming the Fahy committee to help the services carry out his Executive Order promising "equality of treatment" to all military personnel. Another such committee is needed to investigate present racial conditions and advise the services on further policy changes necessary to insure equal treatment for all races.

However, even if the necessary policy changes are made through such Presidential action, the Defense Department and service chains of command will still be left to see that they are translated into practice. For this continuing pressure will be needed within the Pentagon. A permanent body should be created in the Defense Department charged with the responsibility of seeing that the services achieve and maintain complete freedom from discrimination. This body, like a race commission on the state level, should serve as a continuing check on bias and apathy.

No program for change works automatically. Groups and individuals interested in eliminating discrimination must work to see that proper bodies are established by the President and the Defense Department to insure a steady progress toward the goal of total integration. But when such bodies have been set up, there will still need to be interest in their work on the part of civilians. Nothing less can give the Negro serviceman the equality of treatment and opportunity which he deserves.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People this week protested "backward steps in the direc-

tion of a return to segregation" on the part of the Navy Department, as evidenced by segregation on Navy installations in Norfolk, Va., and Charleston, S. C. (*St. Louis Argus*, June 6.)

On January 17, 1951, the General Board of the National Council of Churches adopted a resolution which read in part:

"WHEREAS, the Nation is considering new legislation for both military training and military service; and

"WHEREAS, such legislation may affect the occupational status and location of men, women and families of all races, creeds and national origins within the Nation; and

"WHEREAS, our Nation must by its practices produce a clear witness of truth, justice and righteousness which speaks to the hearts of men throughout the world; and

"WHEREAS, this clear witness is a requirement as basic as military preparedness of the Nation is to assume its place in world leadership; therefore be it

"RESOLVED, That the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA urge that any legislation for military training and military service shall contain provisions which will protect all men and women from segregation and discrimination based on race, creed or national origin in the procurement, processing, training and utilization of manpower for the armed services; . . ."

THE 'RIGHT' TO SEGREGATE

The Supreme Court wound up its current term today by foreshadowing a potentially historic decision on segregation of white and Negro children in public schools.

Governor James F. Byrnes, of South Carolina, has said if his State should lose the right to segregate children, South Carolina will abandon its public school system.

Georgia, Virginia and Alabama have taken steps that could lead to dropping public schools in favor of private schools if segregation is outlawed.

The Supreme Court said today it will hear, after it meets again next October, arguments on two appeals by Negro parents who say their children are stigmatized as inferior by having to attend all-Negro schools. The cases originated in Topeka, Kans., and Clarendon, S. C. . . . (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 10. (Emphasis supplied).)

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People with closed minds are prejudiced in favour of yesterday's thoughts. They resent having to question and re-examine their attitudes and ideas; still more do they resent it when others raise questions. Emerson dismissed such people in this way: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." (Monthly Letter, The Royal Bank of Canada, January.)

LIFTING OUR SIGHTS

To Global Ultimates

... How can the local citizen, pre-occupied with what is close at hand and requires his attention 24 hours a day, be brought to understanding, concern and worthy action about global ultimates, freighted with enormous consequences for the world today and for the future? ...

The rising protest of the non-Caucasian world can no longer be disregarded. Perhaps three-fourths of the human race clamors for recognition, respect and redress, whether out of prolonged colonial domination, or because of discrimination based on color or race, or out of the typical underdevelopment of great regions and even continents. They ask for equality of participation in a world-wide partnership of sovereign states. They want a share of "the larger freedom" envisaged in the United Nations Charter. The method of recognition and reconciliation may vary; but the situation requires a new discipline of mind and means that can only arise from a new dimension of spirit. ...

If these matters have any meaning at all for the Christian community, it must be to demand a renewed dedication; in part, to more adequate comprehension of the conception of Christian responsibility; and in part, to a more mature attempt to grasp and wrestle with international relationships. These are not merely political or philosophical preoccupations. They are practical matters, urgent, human, fateful, that require a new insight and a new will. ... (*Information Service*, Central Department of Research, National Council of Churches, May 10.)

To The African Torch

The month of June, 1952 marks the issuance of Volume I, No. 1 of *The African Torch*, the monthly news letter of *The African Students League of North America*, and we quote from its first editorial entitled, "Africa Drums":

"Today the African continent is much in the news. The reason why this is so is obvious — the great continent is awake and its surging millions are clamoring for self-determination. The continent drums loud and long and will not cease drumming till its desires and aspirations — political, social and cultural are fulfilled.

"... To be silent is to give quiet approval to whatever rubbish is published by those who know practically next to nothing about this complex continent. If we are not fit to tell our own story nobody is; but it would be cowardice on our part and an abuse to our training if all we can do is to fold our arms and acquiesce to whatever literature is produced — no matter how damnable, despicable and scandalous that trash might be. ...

To Christian Action in Africa

Permission to begin negotiations to establish a single Presbyterian Church for members of all races in the East African

colony of Kenya has been asked by the Overseas Presbytery of Kenya in a memorandum to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

The move was made, the memorandum said, in an attempt to avoid having three groups in Kenya of the Presbyterian order with their main difference a "racial one."

"The unhappy divisions manifest in South Africa," it is said, "are here a warning to East Africans who seek to avoid the repetition of a situation where there is a (white) Presbyterian Church of South Africa, a Bantu Presbyterian Church, and an Overseas Presbytery of South Africa which exists only for the sake of missionaries.

"Kenya wishes to set an example of racial cooperation and unity by opening up discussions aiming at one Church with a membership drawn from all races domiciled in East Africa while preserving to Christians of each race their customary forms of worship and administration." (*Religious News Service*, May 9.)

THE CHURCHES

Some Recent Pronouncements

The Methodist Church should seek "to free itself utterly from racial discrimination and segregation," the Church's General Conference declared in a statement (San Francisco).

To this end, it recommended the following as "specific and feasible immediate steps:"

"(1) Let there be opportunity without discrimination or segregation for full participation in all the activities of the Church by the many racial and national groups that make up our Methodist fellowship.

"(2) Let there be equality of accommodation for all races at national and international meetings of the Church.

"(3) Let the institutions of the Church, local churches, colleges, universities, theological schools, hospitals and homes carefully restudy their policies and practices as they relate to race, making certain that these policies and practices are Christian.

"(4) In keeping with the rapid advance being made in the direction of widening employment on democratic principles, let the agencies and the institutions of The Methodist Church employ their staffs on the basis of character and qualifications without racial discrimination.

"(5) In view of the fact that churches of the Central (Negro) Jurisdiction may, in some cases, very properly desire to become a part of another jurisdiction in which they are located, we commend the proposal that enabling legislation be enacted making such readjustments easier of attainment. ... (Such legislation was approved by the General Conference.) ... (*Religious News Service*, May 8.)

Elimination of racial segregation and discrimination in the Congregational Christian Churches "at the earliest possible moment" was voted today as the denomination ended its eleventh biennial

General Council at Pomona College (near Claremont, California). ... (*New York Times*, June 26.)

A Study

The first study of its kind on Chinese Christian churches will be launched this summer by the National Council of Churches, under the direction of Dr. Peter Y. F. Shih, pastor of the Chinese Christian Church of New England, Boston.

The study will be conducted in 25 communities, half of which are in California. Following completion of the survey, the first national conference on Chinese Churches will be held under the auspices of the National Council.

Dr. Shih, a distinguished Chinese scholar, and former dean of the West China Union Theological Seminary, reported that of the 100,000 Chinese in this country, more than 3,000 are Christians. (*Religious Newsweekly*.)

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

In its forthright denunciation of race segregation ... the General Board (of the National Council of Churches) proved that if church opinion is sufficiently aroused, the National Council of Churches will listen, and may act. But if that opinion had not registered its will with force and authority, the council would never have renounced segregation for itself or called on the churches to set their houses in order. Powerful forces hold the council back. The inertia which is inherent in all large bodies lies heavily on it, and some leaders believe that an organization which is not yet two years old must establish itself before tackling controversial issues. A third inhibition is the fear that "radical" pronouncements will alarm the laymen's committee which is counted on to help the council raise its budget. Unfortunately, the representation of labor and of minority races is weak on this committee. Personal and corporate wealth is represented there, sometimes by persons who have little understanding of what the gospel means in contemporary racial and social relationships. ...

But all these considerations had to take second place on the segregation issue. The church's conscience was aroused and had to speak. ... When this became unmistakably clear, the National Council acted. We hope action will not stop here. (*The Christian Century*, June 25.)

The St. Louis Argus of June 20, editorialized: "... If the General Board follows up its request by constantly urging the twenty-nine Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches to work for the complete wiping out of segregation in the church it will be doing one of the greatest services ever performed by Ecclesiastical Orders. ...

This policy adopted by the National Council of Churches is now available in pamphlet form titled "The Churches and Segregation." It is a revision of an offi-

cial statement titled "The Church and Race Relations" approved by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America at a special meeting in Columbus, Ohio, May 5-7, 1946. (This pamphlet has just been received from the printer. Price 10 cents each; \$8.00 per 100.)

Another useful piece of literature available from the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations is the pamphlet titled "Information for Speakers" which contains articles on racial minority groups in the United States and gives a brief review of the progress of human and civil rights for each group. Price, 3 cents each or \$2.00 per 100.

"SWEATSHOPS IN THE SUN"

The Consumers League of New York has taken action to correct what were described as "unfair and abusive practices" upon thousands of migrant workers employed in this state.

Legislation will be asked to protect seasonal labor, the hard core of which has been found to be 25,000 Southern Negroes who come into the state each summer to harvest and process fruits and vegetables. These men, women and children, mostly from Florida, have been supplemented by 4,000 Puerto Ricans and West Indians, plus — , an undetermined number from nearby communities in New York and Pennsylvania.

Their plight has been set forth in a report entitled "Sweatshops in the Sun." It was the result of a year's investigation of methods of recruitment and employment, and of work patterns, living conditions and social implications. . . . (New York Times, July 3, 1952.)

A PRESIDENTIAL VETO

"While the President invoked the Bible and the Constitution to denounce the measure as an abdication of this country's moral leadership in the struggle for world peace, Senator Pat McCarran, Nevada Democrat, assailed his veto as 'un-American' and conforming to Communist doctrine. . . .

According to the New York Times report of June 25, "President Truman

vetoed the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Bill with some of the strongest language he has used in recent Messages to Congress.

"Mr. Truman made three proposals for Congressional action:

1. The creation of a bipartisan commission of outstanding Americans that would examine immigration policy with the aim of bringing it 'into line with our national ideals and our foreign policy.' . . .

2. The enactment of legislation removing racial barriers against Asians, for failure to do so 'can only have serious consequences for our relations with the peoples of the Far East.' . . .

3. The enactment of the program that Mr. Truman sent to Congress from Key West in March, which would admit 300,000 immigrants to the United States over a three-year period, thus alleviating over-population in Europe and aiding refugees from Soviet despotism."

EDITORIAL EXCERPTS

Miss Odilia Jacques, a student at Our Lady of the Lake College, San Antonio, Texas, has been declared the winner of the Southern Conference Educational Fund contest for the best editorial on segregation in education appearing in a college paper. For her editorial entitled "Democracy Challenges Supremacy Myth" she has received \$100 first prize.

Second prize of \$25 went to Henry B. Daniel, of West Virginia State College, Institute, W. Va., for "Segregation in Education." . . .

Miss Jacques wrote: (in part)

"When it comes time to pass out the guns that will defend all Americans, there is no white supremacy. The colored G.I. wears the same uniform, fights the same battles, sheds the same red blood as his white buddies. He risks his life to protect even those who may one day tell him he is not 'equal' enough to enjoy identical educational facilities. . . ."

Mr. Daniel wrote: (in part)

America, it would seem, must choose one of two courses: (1) either remove all barriers — physical and emotional — which thwart the full development of any

of its citizens, or (2) relinquish the role of champion and protector of oppressed peoples of the world. There is no short cut to democratic living. Christianity countenances no halfway measures. (The Southern Patriot, June.)

TWO PUBLICATIONS

Everyone Welcome, a handbook on racial and cultural relations, is available at 50 cents per copy from The Presbyterian Distribution Service, 220 West Monroe Street, Chicago 6, Ill.

You Hold the Key—to Human Rights, a guide to action in the area of human rights, is also available at 50 cents per copy from The Methodist Church, Literature Headquarters, 7820 Reading Road, Cincinnati 37, Ohio.

These two recent publications will be informative and helpful to all persons concerned with strengthening democracy and increasing the hopes for a more peaceful process of social evolution throughout the world.

A LITTLE LIGHT IN THE CORNER

Who Was On the Crew in 1492?

If Columbus were a prophet, he couldn't have picked a more fitting crew to help him discover America. There were men of eight different nationalities, including a brawny Irishman named William of Galway. There were men of many racial strains, and a Negro named Pedro Alonzo piloted one of the vessels. There were Christians and there were Jews such as Luis de Tores, who was the first to set foot on our soil. It seems that the skipper picked his men for their ability and not for their (racial or nationality) background. Columbus not only had a vision of America; he had American vision. . . . (From *The Community Attitudes Committee*, Council for Civic Unity, San Francisco, Calif. April, 1952.)

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ACCORDING TO LONGITUDE
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